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# Contra Chief Says North Arranged 4 Payments

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WASHINGTON, Feb. 20 — A top contra official, Arturo Cruz, said today that the Federal Bureau of Investigation had questioned him twice in recent months about the role Lieut. Col. Oliver North played in arranging a \$7,000 monthly allowance for Mr. Cruz for most of last year.

Mr. Cruz said in an interview today that Colonel North, a former White House aide, offered to arrange for the payments in a meeting in December 1985 and that Mr. Cruz began receiving the money in January 1986.

He added, however, that the money suddenly stopped coming last November when Colonel North was forced to resign from the National Security Council after White House aides said he had diverted profits to the contras from the sale of American arms to Iran.

Mr. Cruz said that he did not know who paid him the money, but that Colonel North told him it came from a "private foreign source." Mr. Cruz said that the money was paid into one of his three private bank accounts and that it was deposited by electronic transfer. He said he never tried to find out where it came from.

## Money Deposited in Costa Rica

Mr. Cruz said he did not know if other Nicaraguan rebel leaders also received money. One of the other top contra leaders, Alfonso Robelo, a wealthy businessman, denied Thursday that he had ever received a salary or living expenses. It is not known if a salary has been provided to the other leading rebel official, Adolfo Calero, who has refused to comment on the matter in the past.

One of Mr. Cruz's senior advisers said the money was deposited in a bank in Costa Rica. Mr. Cruz said he used the money to support his family and pay some of his own living and business expenses as a contra official.

He added that he had paid United States taxes on the money and had told his fellow rebel leaders that he was receiving the money.

The New York Times reported in January that Colonel North had arranged payments for one of the top contra leaders. At the time, the identity of the official and other details of the payments were not known. The Los Angeles Times reported today that the official was Mr. Cruz and gave details of the payments.

## Didn't Want C.I.A. Money

Mr. Cruz said he accepted the money because he had no other source of income to support his family after he left his job as a banker in Washington in order to dedicate himself to the rebel movement.

Two assistants to Mr. Cruz said he accepted Colonel North's help because Mr. Cruz did not want to be supported by the Central Intelligence Agency, as

the assistants said several other rebel officials were.

"I paid taxes on this money and reported it fully to both the other officials of the UNO and to the F.B.I.," Mr. Cruz said. "I have nothing to hide in this." UNO stands for the United Nicaraguan Opposition, the American-backed rebel movement.

It is not clear whether the payments to Mr. Cruz were illegal. But the involvement of Administration officials in supporting the contra rebels in their fight against the Nicaraguan Government, as well as the source and use of their funds, have become major issues for Congressional investigators looking into the Administration's dealings with the rebels in the wake of the Iran-contra affair.

## IN WIL Among Leaders

Mr. Cruz emerged as the top rebel leader this week after winning a bitter internal battle with Mr. Calero over a major reorganization of the rebel movement. Mr. Calero resigned as one of the three leading contra political directors last Monday.

In an indication of the ill will among the rebel leaders, aides to Mr. Cruz said today that they suspected followers of Mr. Calero might have leaked news about the payments arranged by Colonel North to damage Mr. Cruz's reputation.

According to Congressional and Administration sources, Mr. Calero and his followers appear to have had access to far more money than Mr. Cruz, reportedly receiving several million dollars from a private aid network over the last three years, money that has never been publicly accounted for.

One of the conditions Mr. Cruz has demanded as part of a package of measures to reorganize the rebel movement is that all money to the guerrillas be funneled through a single civilian directorate that would regularly audit expenditures.

A spokesman for the F.B.I. said today that Colonel North's involvement in arranging money for Mr. Cruz had been referred to Lawrence E. Walsh, the independent counsel investigating the Iran-contra affair. A spokesman for Mr. Walsh declined to comment.

It appears possible the money Mr. Cruz received could have come from secret Swiss bank accounts that Colonel North helped establish and that were apparently used to funnel profits from the sale of arms to Iran. But it is also possible that the money came from one of the many private donors Colonel North reportedly used to support the contras last year when Congress had cut off money for the rebels.

It is not certain that profits from the Iranian arms sales would have been available to Colonel North in December 1985, when Mr. Cruz said Colonel North promised to arrange the monthly stipend for him.